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ABSTRACT

The introduction of affordable multimedia computers with CD-ROM capacity, videocassette recorders, and connections to the Internet and the World Wide Web have expanded opportunities to help society develop visual literacy. Art images are a natural choice for the teaching of visual literacy. At Northern Illinois University, a course was added in the Instructional Technology program on Visual Literacy which enables students to use the Web as a resource for their assignments and activities. This paper provides: an introduction and background to using Web images in teaching visual literacy; a brief historical overview to images in education; an overview of one approach to analyzing visuals; and a list of art-related Web sites. (AEF)

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Title:

An Exploration of the World Wide Web: Art Images and Visual Literacy

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Images surround us, overwhelm us, influence, entertain, inform, warn, direct, delight, and enlighten us. While academia is a verbal enterprise, our world is a visual, sensory one. Those of us interested and involved with visual literacy are dedicated to helping society recognize the power of visuals and produce more meaningful visual displays. Courses, texts, and conference sessions help students become more visually "literate", able to communicate, understand, and produce communication visually.

The introduction of affordable multimedia computers with CD-ROM capacity, VCR's, and connections to the Internet and the World Wide Web have created an even greater opportunity to help society develop visual literacy. These technologies are a rich, varied, and inexpensive source for an almost infinite variety of images, including but not limited to graphics, photographs, scientific displays, computer-generated art, fine art reproductions, instructional graphics, consumer produced images, click art, and so on.

In addition to its ease and low cost, the World Wide Web has increasing popularity as one of its main characteristics. Businesses and schools are creating their own home pages, and "everyone" wants to be "on the Web". Given all this, we felt a responsibility to help society and our students with the visual issues related to the World Wide Web. We added to a course taught in our Instructional Technology program on Visual Literacy, and designed the course to enable students to use the WWW as a resource for their assignments and activities. In this paper we provide the following:

1. Introduction and background to using the World Wide Web images in teaching visual literacy;

2. A brief historical overview to images in education;

3. An overview of one approach to analyzing visuals; and

4. Locations of a variety of useful images found on the Web which may be especially helpful for others.

Teaching Visual Literacy

Many courses in visual literacy exist at universities across the country. Often these courses are directed at art students, education majors, and in-service teachers, who work with the ideas in developing their own artistic creations or teaching materials. The course we taught is in instructional technology, and is directed at students who would then apply the concepts to creating either student materials (instructional design) or teaching materials for any level student. The course has at its goal the overall improvement of the students' visual literacy, especially their ability to use and interpret visual information and messages for communication. The assignments in the course include finding, selecting and analyzing many different visuals from a variety of sources, including click art, CD-ROMs, film, video and television, and the World Wide Web. Students also analyzed and created visuals intended to inform and persuade viewers, such as ads and posters. As this was an introductory course, use of the computer resources and technologies was limited by laboratory availability; students needed to work in a learning center or other location outside of class time. The assignment to use the WWW was very well received by students; they are as noted above very excited about learning this latest technology. In introducing the variety of visual resources now available, we also reviewed for students the history of the visual education movement in the US as it relates to the teaching of Visual Literacy now.

Historical Overview

An early session of the course focused on the beginnings of visual literacy, the visual education movement in the US. One perspective we shared involved the changing role of the media specialist, or visual curator, as our field developed from visuals in collections and became more involved with their use in education. For example, the museum as an institution in the United States has a long standing tradition. Our first museum was established by Charles Wilson Peale and is documented by his 1822 self-portrait *The Artist in his Museum*. The earliest examples of the visual instruction movement are demonstrated by the development of museum/school interaction. The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth was a time of extraordinary growth for United States museums. This fact is evidenced by the following list of museums: in 1880 the Metropolitan Museum of Art was opened in New York City; in 1905 the St. Louis Museum was established with strong links to the school system; the Cleveland Museum of Art was

opened in 1909; and Chicago's Field Museum opened in 1911, to name just a few of the major institutions. The types of student experiences established by the museum/school interactions became the basis for Hoban's 1937 book *Visualizing the Curriculum*. His theory explains why these experiences were important. Essentially, Hoban states that the first level of learning occurs when there is interaction with the actual object. This type of interaction has also been the most important when dealing with a work of art.

Another important aspect of the Visual Instruction Movement was the use of slides and film in education. As early as 1895, Chicago school principals realized the importance of visual instruction. They used personal funds to establish a slide collection for their schools' use. By 1917 they had amassed over 8,000 slides and donated the collection to the School Board for district wide circulation. Also by this time there was a visual instruction course included in teacher education preparation at the University of Minnesota.

Effects of Specialization

It would appear that visual instruction was becoming an integral part of the nations' education. However, with the introduction of various media, slides and film, there developed the specialization in production and administration of materials. This technology specialization separated the visual instruction component from classroom delivery. A new territory was created, that of the specialist. Visual instruction ownership moved from the teachers to the specialist. The scenario that appeared was one of the teacher having to go to the specialist for the images. (This presentation was illustrated by art images from the Art Department collection). An art image that comes to mind is that of Ingres' *Jupiter and Thetis*. In this nineteenth century painting Thetis is clearly begging Jupiter for favors. In the past, libraries or visual resource centers often guarded their materials rather than share them. The specialist could wield power over the distribution of images much like the power displayed in this image of Jupiter. This isolationist philosophy of some specialists may have lead in part to the decline of the visual instruction movement.

According to Saettler (1990), the decline of the visual instruction movement occurred after World War II. Then current communication models explored the concrete-abstract continuum first outlined by Hoban (1937) and later defined by Dale's Cone of Experience. However, these models were not reflected in the specialists' philosophy. These first Instructional Technologists had become a small, isolated group of people who enjoyed top-level decision making positions in regard to administrative functions and the production of visual instruction, but who ignored current, relevant psychological theories. This decline could be illustrated by Thomas Couture's *Romans of Decadence*. Like the Roman's who lived only in Rome, isolating themselves from the outlying areas, the visual specialists took on a role of authority and power separating themselves from the educators.

The paradigm shift that occurred in the 1970s from behaviorism to cognition provided a new role for visual instruction. Olson and Bruner stated that, "instructional media, therefore cannot be chosen simply in terms of their ability to convey certain kinds of content, but also be chosen in terms of their ability to develop the processing skills that make up such an important part of human intelligence" (Saettler, 1990, p.440). The focus then in this new paradigm shifted from the media like film (i.e. what is the film doing to the learner) to the thought processes involved in evaluating that film or image. Depth of processing could then be used to evaluate images; consequently, the technology or medium c/should become transparent to a point. This paradigm shift breathed new life into the visual instruction movement, which has been renamed visual literacy since 1969.

Analyzing Visual Messages-A Construct

Visual literacy research can provide a structural framework for courses such as Visual Literacy or Introduction to the Visual Arts. Barbara Fredette's research combined with the theories of Arnheim and Feldman create her approach to reading pictures or images (Fredette, 1994). Her method demonstrates a depth of thought processing which can be applied to this course. Fredette describes the process in four steps; description, analysis of form, creative interpretation and critical interpretation. She states that based on her research with students, viewers go through each of these processes in the order stated and that this order represents an hierarchy of thought processing.

It has been our experience with college level students over the past five years that they process a work of art in a slightly different manner. They use the same four steps but process them in a slightly different order; description, creative interpretation, analysis of from and critical interpretation. We believe they change this order for the following reasons. Students have the ability to provide a description and a creative interpretation without any additional information. They can describe images, shapes, color and lines. They also readily apply their own knowledge to the art work as they attempt to 'make sense' of it within their own experiences. However, analysis of form demands that they

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know/learn the terminology of analysis and that they can apply those terms to works previously unseen. This process develops critical thinking skills. Secondly, they must bring with them some research skills for the fourth level , the critical interpretation of a work. Viewers must find the resources necessary to provide themselves with additional information, such as culture, iconography and relationship to the media. Hopefully they will become more informed viewers about the work of art.

In conclusion, Fredette's framework, modified, provides a solid structure for the students in introductory visual arts courses. The students need to understand which level of explication is currently being used in their classroom setting, and need to be able to work between levels to help themselves fully understand a visual work and expand their visual literacy.

Using the World Wide Web

Many Web sites have been located which could be shared with students and used for visual examples in classes. Our students drew from these sources and others to analyze and present their ideas in class. Since the Web is ever-changing, the list presented is of course dated as we print it out. But these sources should help lead to others current at the time of use. (Examples from the following sites were shared using slides copied from files taken from the Web).

Art related Websites (fall, 1996)

World Wide Arts Resource
http://www.concourse.com/wwar/default.html

ArtServe, Australian National University.
http://rubens.anu.edu.au

AIDS Memorial Quilt Website
http://www.aidsquilt.org/

Ansel Adams
http://www.book.uci.edu/AdamsHome.html

Asian Arts
http://www.webart.com/asianart/index.html

Christo's and Jeanne-Claude's homepage
http://pomo.nbn.com/youcan/christo/index.htm

Christus Rex the Vatican museums
http://www.christusrex.org/

Frida Kahlo
http://www.cascade.net/kahlo.html

Indianapolis Museum of Art
http://www.otisnet.com/ima

Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaelogy
http://www.memst.edu/egypt/main.html

International Visual Literacy Association
http://www.emporia.edu/S/www/slim/resource/IVLA/IVLA.htm

Le WebMuseum
http://www.emf.net/wm/

Minneapolis Institute of Arts
http://www.mtn.org/MIA/mia_intro.html#index.

Museum of Bad Art
http://glyphs.com/moba/

National Museum of African Art
http://www.si.edu/organiza/museums/africart/start.htm

National Museum of Slovenia
http://stena.arnes.si/guest/ljnarodnim4/ang/index.html

On-Line Visual Literacy Project
http://www.pomona.claremont.edu/visual-lit/intro.html

Oriental Institute Museum
http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/

Prehistoric caves at Vallon-Pont-d'Arc
http://www.culture.fr/culture/gvpda-en.htm.

Surrealism
http://pharmdec.wustl.edu/juju/surr/surrealism.html

Teaching Contemporary Art:Sandy Skoglund
http:/www.artsednet.getty.edu/

Andy Warhol
http://www.warhol.org/warhol/warhol.html

Women Artists Archive
http://www.sonoma.edu/library/waa/

World Art Treasures
http://sgwww.epfl.ch/BERGER/index.html

Summary

Art images are a natural choice for the teaching of visual literacy. Many academic settings have art collections available, but students do not always have such access. The history of the visual instruction movement may not be familiar to many students in educational technology, who may think that visuals were newly introduced with television and computer software. The historical perspective summarized here is one that helps students understand the importance and acceptance of the visual instruction perspective. In addition, the use of new technologies makes the teaching of visual literacy more current and viable for instructional technology students. It is hoped that the background, analysis techniques, and Web sites included here make the teaching of visual literacy more interesting and valuable for others.

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Hoban, Charles et.al. (1937). *Visualizing the Curriculum*. New York: Dryden Press.

Saettler, Paul (1990). *The Evolution of American Educational Technology*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc.